Nomen and full heading:

**Astra’s Diary: Spartacus**

We arrived first in Capua in 73 BC – Spartacus was known to have trained at the gladiator school there. Tempus and I weren’t exactly sure what Dis was planning, and Capua was the first place we really knew for certain where his target would be. Before that, it was unclear if Spartacus had been a part of the Roman army and abandoned it or if he had been taken captive fighting against the Roman army in Thrace.

Walking through the market, a man was selling leather satchels that seemed to be perfectly Fido-sized. I paid him and hoisted my furry bundle into his new perch on my back so he could look about without wandering into mischief like the last time.

Thus, we cautiously approached the infamous *ludus* where we could hear the sound of wooden swords clacking as men sparred and trained for their big day in the arena. We knocked at the door without much of a plan. A heavyset man answered and stared at us, then made a grunting noise that sounded something like a question. I quickly remembered that my father used to give tours of my uncle’s gladiatorial school in Rome. Afterwards he would often come home making silly impressions of rich aristocratic ladies with nothing to do but swoon at the sight of their favorite gladiator celebrity. Tempus and I weren’t exactly rich aristocratic ladies, but as soon as we passed a few coins to the palm of the muscly doorkeeper, he grunted again – this time in a more welcoming tone, and waved us inside.

He led us to the center of the complex, where there was a large arena and plenty of seating – apparently visitors were the norm here. We scanned faces in the crowds, gladiators training in the arena, and anything else that moved – but no signs of Dis could be found. Was he planning to attack Spartacus and face him in the arena? What would even be the point of that?

We left, feeling a little frustrated and clueless. Not long after, shouts erupted and Tempus quickly pulled me into the entrance of nearby *taberna* just in time. We peeked out the entrance as a swarm of escaping gladiators rushed by – some were armed with kitchen utensils, others with weapons from the arena. All seemed to be going according to history so far, and luckily we knew where they were headed.

Tempus suggested we fast forward through time a bit and meet Spartacus at his camp on Mount Vesuvius. Spartacus would be leading his small band of gladiators to defend themselves on its slopes. They were quite successful there – partially because most of the Roman army was distracted elsewhere, and partially because Spartacus had some brilliant tactics. They once defeated an army of Roman soldiers by descending the cliffs on ropes made from vines and attacking their encampment from behind. More slaves would escape and join his revolt, and we could pretend to be among them.

That was when we caught sight of Dis. He was masquerading as a Gallic man with long curly hair named Crixus, and seemed to be a respected leader in the camp. When we arrived he was delivering a rousing speech to a group of men armed with crude swords and shields hacked out of tree limbs nailed together. And while Spartacus was busy training his new recruits to fight to defend themselves as they escaped Roman territory to return to their homelands, “Crixus” was busy spreading the idea that they should use their new lethal skills for revenge on Rome. Dis had a clear plan to use the slaves’ rebellion to attack Rome – and if he recruited enough of them, he could indeed inflict some damage. They were still no match for the full force of the Roman militia. Ultimately, in this desperate attempt to strike against his enemy, Dis would be leading them to their doom instead of to freedom.

We tried to talk to Spartacus about the problem, but he wouldn’t hear it. Crixus was his trusted friend. Tempus and I decided that if Crixus could recruit people to his cause, so could we. We would have loud conversations about how big the Roman army was, or how they wouldn’t care to pursue escaped slaves if we could just make it beyond the Alps. Then we’d ask everyone about all their future plans once they were free and out of Rome. Some said they would plan to get a little farm and grow some crops. Others wanted to be reunited with relatives and return to their homelands.

Our plan…well…it kind of worked. You could say it worked just enough. Crixus led a faction of men to raid the Roman countryside, and they were soon crushed by Roman troops. Spartacus lived to fight another day, leading the rest of his people north. We left the rest to the history that the Fates intended. Somewhere along the way though, Spartacus’ rebel army turned south again. Some speculate that they intended to lead a revolt in Sicily; perhaps, influenced by the message of Crixus, they still wanted revenge on Rome, and Spartacus could not convince them otherwise. The Senate gave command of eight legions to a man named Marcus Licinius Crassus, an ambitious and very rich man in Rome. With additional legions lead by General Pompey returning from Spain as well, Spartacus was soon defeated.

**Reading Comprehension Questions –** on a separate piece of paper, answer the questions below in complete sentences.

1) Where did Spartacus and the gladiators first hide out after they escaped Capua?

2) Who tried to convince the rebel army to seek revenge and attack Rome?

3) Who was the very wealthy Roman man who led legions and defeated Spartacus?

4) What do you think were the main goals of Spartacus?

5) At the end, to what extent does Spartacus achieve his goals?

6) Do you think Spartacus is an effective leader? Why or why not?